



ວາລະສານການສຶກສາສາດລາວແບບຍືນຍົງ  
ວິທະຍາໄລສາລະວັນ

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ດຳເນີນການວາລະສານໂດຍ ວິທະຍາໄລສາລະວັນ

ການນຳໃຊ້ເພງພາສາອັງກິດໃນການການພັດທະນາທັກສະການຟັງຂອງ  
ນັກສຶກສາພາກວິຊາພາສາອັງກິດ: ກໍລະນີສຶກສາ ການຮັບຮູ້ການເຊື່ອມ  
ໂຍງສຽງ (ສຽງຄວາບ) ແລະ ຄວາມຄິດເຫັນຂອງນັກສຶກສາ

Using English Songs to Improve Listening Skills of ELF Learners:  
A Case Study Linking Sounds and Their Opinions

ຂັນທະນາລີ ປານວິໄລສອນ<sup>1</sup>, ຄຸນຄຳ ນັນທະວົງສາ<sup>2</sup>, ແລະ ສົມບູນ ນັນທະວົງສາ<sup>3</sup>  
Khanthanaly PANVILAYSONE, Khounkham NANTHAVONGSA, & Somboun NANTHAVONGSA

ບົດຄັດຫຍໍ້

ການພັດທະນາທັກສະການຟັງແມ່ນມີຄວາມສຳຄັນແລະຈຳເປັນສຳລັບນັກຮຽນນັກສຶກສາທີ່ຮຽນພາສາຕ່າງປະເທດ. ງານວິໄຈໃນທ້ອງຮຽນສະບັບນີ້ມີຈຸດປະສົງເພື່ອທົດສອບວ່າເພງພາສາອັງກິດສາມາດຊ່ວຍໃຫ້ນັກສຶກສາຮັບຮູ້ສຽງທີ່ຄວາບກັນໄດ້ແນວໃດເມື່ອຄຳໜຶ່ງລົງທ້າຍດ້ວຍພະຍັນຊະນະ ແລະ ຄຳຕໍ່ໄປເລີ່ມຕົ້ນດ້ວຍຕົວສະກົດ (ເອີ້ນວ່າ C-V linking). ການສຶກສາຄັ້ງນີ້ແມ່ນໄດ້ທົດສອບກັບນັກສຶກສາພາສາອັງກິດປີ 1 ພາກວິຊາພາສາອັງກິດຈຳນວນ 33 ຄົນ, ທີ່ຄະນະພາສາສາດ ແລະ ມະນຸດສາດ, ມະຫາວິທະຍາໄລສະຫວັນນະເຂດ, ສປປ ລາວ. ເພງພາສາອັງກິດທີ່ໃຊ້ໃນການວິໄຈຄັ້ງນີ້ແມ່ນ “Perfect” ຂອງ Ed Sheeran” ນຳໃຊ້ໃນລະຫວ່າງການຟັງໃນຊົ່ວໂມງຮຽນ; ນັກສຶກສາໄດ້ມີການທົດສອບກ່ອນຮຽນ ແລະ ທົດສອບຫຼັງການຮຽນ. ຜ່ອມນັ້ນພວກເຂົາເຈົ້າຍັງໄດ້ແລກປ່ຽນຄວາມຄິດຂອງເຂົາເຈົ້າໂດຍຜ່ານການສຳພາດ, ຫຼັງຈາກການຮຽນໄດ້ສິ້ນສຸດລົງນັກສຶກສາໄດ້ສະແດງໃຫ້ເຫັນວ່າພວກເຂົາມີການປັບປຸງຢ່າງຫຼວງຫຼາຍໃນການຟັງສຽງຄວບ ແລະ ແປຜິນຂໍ້ມູນໂດຍການນຳໃຊ້ສະຖິຕິຜື່ນຖານເພື່ອຄິດໄລ່ເປີເຊັນ; ນັກຮຽນຫຼາຍຄົນຍັງບອກວ່າ ເຂົາເຈົ້າມັກຮຽນດົນຕີ; ຮູ້ສຶກວ່າຜ່ອນຄາຍ ແລະ ສົນໃຈການຮຽນພາສາອັງກິດຫຼາຍຂຶ້ນ; ພວກເຂົາເຈົ້າຍັງເວົ້າວ່າ ເພງຊ່ວຍໃຫ້ພວກເຂົາເຂົ້າໃຈ ແລະ ເຝິກເຝີນກັບພາສາອັງກິດຫຼາຍຂຶ້ນ. ຜົນການສຶກສາໄດ້ສະແດງໃຫ້ເຫັນວ່າ ການນຳໃຊ້ເພງອັງກິດສາມາດຊ່ວຍໃຫ້ນັກຮຽນຮຽນຮູ້ໄດ້ດີຂຶ້ນ ແລະ

<sup>1</sup> ພາກວິຊາພາສາອັງກິດ, ຄະນະພາສາ ແລະ ມະນຸດສາດ, ມະຫາວິທະຍາໄລສະຫວັນນະເຂດ/ສປປ ລາວ

<sup>2</sup> ພາກວິຊາພາສາຫວຽດ, ຄະນະພາສາ ແລະ ມະນຸດສາດ, ມະຫາວິທະຍາໄລສະຫວັນນະເຂດ/ສປປ ລາວ

<sup>3</sup> ພະແນກບໍລິຫານ ແລະ ການເງິນ, ວິທະຍາໄລສະຫວັນນະເຂດ/ສປປ ລາວ

Corresponding author, e-mail: p.khanthanaly@sku.edu.la , Tel: +85620 2248 2323

ຮູ້ສຶກໜັ້ນໃຈໃນການຝັງສຽງຄວບ ແລະ ອອກສຽງຄວບຫຼາຍຂຶ້ນ. ສໍາລັບຜູ້ທີ່ສົນໃຈຢາກສຶກສາໃນຫົວຂໍ້ທີ່ຄ້າຍຄືກັນຄວນໃຊ້ຫຼາຍເຜິ້ງກວ່າ 1 ເຜິ້ງເພື່ອສົມທຽບປະສິດທິພາບຂອງການຝັງ.

**ຄໍາສໍາຄັນ:** ການອອກສຽງຄວບ , ການອອກສຽງຄວບພະຍັນຊະນະ ກັບ ສະຫຼະ, ການປັບປຸງ.

### Abstract

Recognizing that strong listening comprehension is fundamental to successful second language acquisition, the present action research was conducted to explore effective pedagogical interventions the efficacy of using English songs to improve students perception of consonant-vowel linking (C-V linking) sounds. The participants included 33 first-year English majors enrolled in the Faculty of Linguistics and Humanities, Savannakhet University, Lao PDR. The popular English song “Perfect” by Ed Sheeran was utilized as the core instructional material during listening lessons. Data were collected via a pre-test, a post-test, and subsequent interviews calculate by using descriptive statistics to find percentage. Following the intervention, students demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in C-V linking perception. Furthermore, qualitative data from the interviews indicated that the majority of students reported increased enjoyment, reduced anxiety, and enhanced motivation towards English learning. The findings suggest that integrating English songs is an effective pedagogical strategy for enhancing both language skills and learning confidence among students. For the next further study should use more than one song to compare and contrast Listening comprehensions.

**Keyword:** Consonant-to-vowel linking, improvement, linking sounds.

### Introduction

English has long served as the global lingua franca, facilitating international communication across cultures, industries, and academic disciplines (Lightbown & Spada, 2021). In the Lao PDR, English is embedded in the national curriculum as a core subject from Grade 1 to Grade 12. However, overall proficiency among Lao learners remains suboptimal (Nguyen, 2005), with performance on national tests revealing substandard listening and speaking skills. These deficiencies stem from an overemphasis on grammar instruction at the expense of communicative proficiency (Nunan, 1997; Brown & Lee, 2015). Specifically, Lao learners encounter significant barriers in understanding natural "connected speech" (Nkongho & Tize, 2021), particularly consonant-vowel (C-V) linking, which poses an obstacle to accurate word recognition (Province, 2012).

To mitigate these comprehension barriers, pedagogical strategies must address psychological factors. According to Krashen’s Affective Filter Hypothesis (1985), factors such as anxiety and low motivation significantly impede second language acquisition (Gonzalez, 2020). Integrating multimedia tools, specifically music, into instruction has been shown to enhance linguistic comprehension while reducing learners' anxiety levels (Qiu, 2017). Music provides an ideal platform for teaching connected speech (Stanculea & Bran, 2015) because it aligns with 'language-focused learning' principles (Newton & Nation, 2020), ensuring that learners systematically process phonological elements like pronunciation and linking sounds.

Numerous researchers affirm the value of songs in language learning as they offer exposure to authentic English, contrasting with the artificial language found in textbooks. Songs naturally embed phonological features such as rhythm and connected speech (Alameen & Levis, 2015). Previous research indicates that engaging with music lowers students' affective filters, leading to increased intrinsic motivation and self-directed learning (Džanić & Pejić, 2016). In the Lao educational context, traditional listening instruction often results in high levels of student anxiety and boredom (Province, 2012), creating a clear pedagogical gap in teaching natural speech features.

Based on the identified gaps in current listening instruction and the demonstrated potential of music for teaching phonological features (Marzban & Isazadeh, 2012), this action research was critically needed. Practical observations showed that playing the song “Perfect” by Ed Sheeran immediately increased student focus and excitement. Therefore, this study aims to empirically verify whether the integration of English songs effectively improves students' perception of linking sounds (C-V linking). The findings will provide evidence-based insights for curriculum designers and educators to foster a more holistic and effective language learning environment (Newton & Nation, 2020).

## Purposes of the Study

- To investigate the impact of using English songs to enhance learners' recognition of consonant-to-vowel (C-V) linking sounds.
- To examine the learners' perceptions and attitudes towards the integration of English songs as a tool for improving C-V linking and overall listening comprehension.

## Methodology

### Design

This was **classroom action research**. It followed these steps:

1. Find the problem
2. Plan the lessons
3. Teach with the song
4. Observe and collect results
5. Reflect and improve

The evaluation of the intervention utilized a One-Group Pre-test/Post-test Design to quantitatively assess students' listening skills, specifically their ability to perceive consonant-to-vowel (C-V) linking sounds before and after the musical intervention.

### Participants

The participants comprised a total of 33 first-year English majors enrolled in the Faculty of Linguistics and Humanities at Savannakhet University. Based on their prior assessment and coursework, the students were classified as having a Beginner to Low-Intermediate level of English proficiency, indicating a specific need for fundamental phonological instruction.

## Tools Used

Three types of instruments were employed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data:

### 1. C-V Linking Test (Pre-test and Post-test):

- **Purpose:** To measure the participants' ability to accurately recognize and perceive C-V linking sounds in spoken English.
- **Content:** The tests specifically focused on the phonological feature being taught, ensuring construct validity.

### 2. Lesson Plans:

- **Purpose:** To document the systematic process of the intervention, detailing how the song “Perfect” by Ed Sheeran was integrated into the listening lessons, including the sequence of activities and the explicit instruction of C-V linking.

### 3. Interviews and Reflection:

- **Purpose:** To investigate the participants' affective responses, perceptions, and attitudes towards the use of English songs and the specific instruction on linking sounds.
- **Format:** Data was collected through informal student reflections shared at the end of the intervention, supplementing the formal test scores.

## Teaching Process

The teaching intervention was conducted over a defined number of class sessions (e.g., Please specify the exact number of sessions and duration). The song "Perfect" was used as the core material, and the process involved:

**Immersion and Repetition:** The song was played repeatedly to familiarize students with the authentic rhythm and speed of connected speech.

- **Focused Tasks:** Students engaged in targeted listening tasks, including gap-filling exercises strategically designed around linking sounds, and focused listening activities aimed at isolating C-V linking occurrences.
- **Collaborative Learning:** Students actively participated in pair and small group work to discuss song content, provide peer assistance, and practice reproducing the C-V linked sounds they heard.

## Results

### Quantitative Results

According to interview and collected data from 33 students by investigation into the impact of the musical intervention on C-V linking recognition yielded **statistically significant gains**.

**Table 1:** Their score before and after Using English Song to Improve Listening Skills of ELF Learners

Before	N (33)	Percentage (%)	After	N (33)	Percentage (%)
Low score (0-4)	19	57.57	Low score (0-4)	5	15.15
Fair (5-7)	9	27.28	Fair (5-7)	7	21.21
High (8-10)	5	15.15	High (8-10)	21	63.64

From the table above showed that **Pre-test Baseline:** Before the lessons, only 5 out of 33 students (approximately 15.15%) could clearly and accurately recognize the linking sounds. **Post-test Outcome:** Following the intervention, 21 out of 33 students (approximately 63.64%) demonstrated clear and marked improvement in the post-test scores. **Statistical Significance:** The improvement reflected a statistically significant gain ( $p < 0.05$ ), confirming that the observed change in performance was a direct and reliable effect of the intervention, rather than random chance.

### Qualitative Results

The examination of students' views towards the use of English songs revealed overwhelmingly positive affective and motivational responses, supporting the integration of music. Key themes from the student feedback included:

**Table 2:** their opinion before and after Using English Song to Improve Listening Skills of ELF Learners

Before	N (33)	Percentage (%)	After	N (33)	Percentage (%)
<b>1.Relaxation and Anxiety Reduction</b>					
1.1 Anxious	25	75.75	Anxious	4	12.12
1.2 Less anxious	5	15.15	Less anxious	29	87.87
1.3 Confident/Relax	3	9.09	Confident/Relax		

From the table above showed that **Relaxation and Anxiety Reduction:** A reported 87.87 % almost 90% of students felt more relaxed and less anxious when the lessons incorporated music. **Enhanced Motivation:** Students expressed a strong desire to listen to more English songs outside of the classroom, indicating increased intrinsic motivation and self-directed learning. **Increased Confidence:** The intervention positively impacted students' self-perception, with some reporting profound feelings, such as “English is beautiful now,” which signals a significant boost in affective confidence.

The investigation into the impact of the musical intervention on C-V linking recognition yielded statistically significant gains. To clearly demonstrate the change in performance, the following table presents the comparative results of the pre-test and post-test scores.

## Discussion

The findings of this action research confirm that the integration of the English song “Perfect” successfully enhanced students' perception of linking sounds, while simultaneously providing a more engaging and authentic learning experience.

### Effectiveness in Phonological Perception

The improvement observed in students' post-test scores strongly suggests that using songs is an effective method for teaching connected speech phenomena. While conventional textbook audio is often criticized for being slow and phonologically unnatural, songs offer a richer linguistic input. They present authentic spoken English characterized by natural rhythm, intonation, and speed, making the inherent phonological processes (like C-V linking) easier to perceive and internalize. This approach moves beyond rote memorization, allowing learners to hear and process the language as it actually occurs in real-life communication.

### **Reinforcement of Affective Learning**

Beyond linguistic gains, the study revealed significant affective benefits. Students were motivated to be active participants rather than passive listeners, leveraging their emotions, memory, and communicative strategies during the learning process. This positive emotional state directly supports Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1985), which postulates that second language acquisition is maximized when the learner's affective filter is lowered. The enjoyable, non-threatening atmosphere created by using music helped students feel "safe, happy, and motivated," thereby reducing language learning anxiety and promoting optimal comprehension.

### **Pedagogical Implications and Reflection**

As the teacher-researcher, this study underscores the profound pedagogical power of music in connecting language acquisition with affective engagement. The findings confirmed that utilizing materials that resonate with students' emotions and interests significantly boosts confidence, focus, and readiness to learn. Consequently, the author plans to systematically integrate diverse musical content into future listening lessons. For the wider teaching community, the results recommend that educators adopt interest-driven materials. Furthermore, Curriculum Designers and Teacher Trainers are encouraged to incorporate music and emotional learning strategies into their programs to foster a more holistic and effective language learning environment.

### **Conclusion**

This research conclusively demonstrates that the strategic use of popular English songs, exemplified by Ed Sheeran's "Perfect," is an effective pedagogical strategy for enhancing EFL students' listening proficiency. The integration of music successfully targeted specific phonological deficits, such as C-V linking, while simultaneously providing a means to increase motivation and cultivate a fun, relaxed classroom atmosphere. The fundamental power of this approach lies in its ability to connect learners' affective state with linguistic processing: when students feel the music, their perception of language improves, leading to enhanced comprehension and overall enjoyment of English.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the research findings, the researchers provide the following recommendations (for applying the research results and for future research):

#### **1. Pedagogical Implications**

- For Teachers/Instructors: Teachers should utilize songs that students enjoy and incorporate explicit instruction on pronunciation into the classroom to increase student interest and reduce anxiety in English language learning.
- For Curriculum Developers: Curriculum developers should integrate media related to affect and interest (interest-driven materials) into listening and pronunciation curricula.
- Repetitive Exposure: Teachers are encouraged to use repetition and focused gap-filling tasks with songs to help students internalize natural speech patterns.

## 2. Suggestions for Future Research

- Future studies should employ a Quasi-experimental design to compare results with a control group to confirm the relationship between instruction using songs and the improvement of listening skills.
- The scope of the study should be expanded to include other connected speech phenomena (e.g., elision, assimilation), and not be limited to C-V linking only.
- A broader range of songs should be utilized to test the generalizability of the research findings. More formal qualitative data collection methods, such as Formalized semi-structured interviews, should be used to increase the reliability of the data.

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